

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 NSCE-00

SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 AID-05 DHA-05 IO-13 OMB-01

TRSE-00 MCT-01 DLOS-09 OES-07 SAB-02 /093 W

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FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4822

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EO 11652: N/A

TAGS: EWWT, PDIP, PN

SUBJECT: ROEL SEPTEMBER 6 PRESS CONFERENCE IN WASHINGTON

REF: SIMCOX/STARRS TELCON SEPT 7

1. ON SEPT 7 MEXICO CITY'S LEFT-LEANING DAILY EL DIA CARRIED FULL TEXT OF FONSEC SANTIAGO ROEL'S SEPT 6 PRESS INTERVIEW WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF MEXICAN AND LATIN AMERICAN MEDIA RESIDENT IN WASHINGTON. PRIMARY FOCUS OF INTERVIEW WAS ON MEXICAN POSITION VIS-A-VIS NEW PANAMA CANAL TREATY--PARTICULARLY NEUTRALITY--AND "DECLARATION OF WASHINGTON." ROEL WAS REPETITIVE AND AMBIGUOUS IN RESPONDING TO POINTED QUESTIONS RE GOM ATTITUDE TOWARD TREATY AND PRESIDENT LOPEZ PORTILLO'S DECISION NOT TO ATTEND SIGNING CEREMONY IN WASHINGTON.

2. AFTER CAREFUL READING AND INTERPRETATION, THE BASIC MEXICAN POSITION ENUNCIATED BY ROEL IN HIS HIGHLY PERSONALIZED RESPONSES TO MEDIA QUESTIONS IS AS FOLLOWS: NOTING THAT PRESIDENT CARTER IS MAKING A BIG EFFORT TO SHAPE THE TREATY WITH ITS CLAUSES REGARDING NEUTRALITY,
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"THE OPTION" (I.E., SEA-LEVEL CANAL OPTION) AND LATER THE PROTOCOL RATIFICATION, ROEL STATED THAT MEXICO HAS A PROBLEM WITH RESPECT TO SIGNING THE "DECLARATION OF WASHINGTON WHEREBY ALL HEADS OF STATE, HEADS OF GOVERNMENT OR REPRESENTATIVES OF AMERICAN REPUBLICS ARE REQUESTED TO REGISTER THEIR PROFOUND SATISFACTION AT SIGNATURE BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE U.S. AND THE HEAD OF

THE PANAMANIAN GOVERNMENT OF THE 1977 CANAL TREATY AND THE TREATY RELATING TO THE PERMANENT NEUTRALITY AND OPERATION OF THE PANAMA CANAL." MEXICO, ROEL SOUGHT TO EXPLAIN SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE INTERVIEW, HAS A PROBLEM REGARDING THE DECLARATION TEXT AS DRAFTED BECAUSE, HE IMPLIED, IT WOULD COMPROMISE THE PRINCIPLES WHICH MEXICO HAS INVARIABLY DEFENDED THROUGHOUT ITS HISTORY IN MATTERS RELATED TO INTERNATIONAL LAW.

3. IN LIEU OF THE ABOVE-QUOTED STATEMENT IN THE DECLARATION OF WASHINGTON, ROEL WENT ON TO SAY THAT MEXICO, BASED ON CLEAR TELEPHONIC INSTRUCTIONS FROM PRESIDENT LOPEZ PORTILLO, PROPOSES THE FOLLOWING LANGUAGE: "WE REGISTER OUR PROFOUND SATISFACTION AND OUR SPECIAL CONGRATULATIONS TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, JAMES E. CARTER, AND THE HEAD OF THE GOVERNMENT OF PANAMA, GENERAL OMAR TORRIJOS, FOR HAVING INITIATED THE STEPS WHICH WILL LEAD TO FULL SOVEREIGNTY BY THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA OVER THE WHOLE OF ITS TERRITORY." SUCH A POSITION, ROEL EXPLAINED VAGUELY, WOULD NOT COMPROMISE IN THE LEAST THE GOM'S POSITION IN DEFENSE OF "THE SOVEREIGNTY OF THE CANAL, THAT IS, SOVEREIGNTY OVER THE TERRITORY OF THE CANAL OF THE SISTER REPUBLIC OF CENTRAL AMERICA."

4. ROEL EMPHASIZED SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE INTERVIEW THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT FOR MEXICO TO STATE ITS POSITION CLEARLY, LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EXPLAINING THAT THE GOM DOES NOT WISH TO INTRUDE IN THE INTERNAL POLITICS OF THE U.S. AND HAS ALWAYS BEEN VERY OBSERVANT OF MEXICO'S PRINCIPLES, ESPECIALLY THAT OF "NON-INTERVENTION." SHOULD MEXICO'S SUGGESTION REGARDING REWORDING OR SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE FOR THE DECLARATION OF WASHINGTON NOT BE ACCEPTED FOR ANY REASON, ROEL INDICATED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT WOULD MAKE THE "CORRESPONDING RESERVATION" AT THE TIME WHEN THE DOCUMENT IS PASSED AROUND FOR SIGNATURE. MEXICO, HE IMPLIED, WOULD ADD THAT IT IS ADOPTING THIS POSITION SINCE IN EFFECT IT HAS NOT HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO STUDY THE CONTENTS OF THE TREATY.

5. AFTER SEVERAL POINTED QUESTIONS AIMED AT A CLEARER STATEMENT AS TO WHETHER MEXICO WOULD SIGN THE DECLARATION OF WASHINGTON, ROEL RESPONDED BY SAYING THAT MEXICO COULD ONLY ACCEPT THE LANGUAGE WHICH HE HAD OUTLINED AND REFERRED AGAIN TO THE GOM'S PROFOUND SATISFACTION AT THIS DECISION WHICH WOULD LEAD TO "FULL SOVEREIGNTY OF THE REPUBLIC OF PANAMA OVER ALL OF ITS TERRITORY." ALTHOUGH ROEL IMPLIED THAT IF THE SUBSTITUTE LANGUAGE HE SPECIFIED WERE TO BE ACCEPTED VERBATIM IN THE DECLARATION HE WOULD SIGN, HE RAISED DUST WHEN THE REPORTERS ASKED HIM SPECI-

FICALLY IF THIS WAS HIS POSITION, AND THEIR ATTEMPT TO PIN HIM DOWN RESULTED IN CONTINUED EQUIVOCATION. EL SOL DE MEXICO IN SUMMARIZING THE INTERVIEW CONCLUDED THAT ROEL SAID THAT "WE WILL NOT SIGN THE DECLARATION."

6. COMMENT: BOTH FROM SECRETARY ROEL'S UNIQUE PROSE AND THE INFORMAL COMMENTS TO EMBOFFS BY A WELL-INFORMED OFFICIAL OF THE SECRETARIAT, IT NOW SEEMS CLEAR THAT MEXICO DOES NOT WANT TO ASSOCIATE ITSELF PUBLICLY IN ANY WAY WITH THE NEUTRALITY AGREEMENT WHICH HAS BEEN PUBLICLY INTERPRETED BY U.S. OFFICIALS AS GIVING THE USG THE RIGHT TO MILITARILY INTERVENE IN PANAMA AT ANY TIME AFTER THE YEAR 2000 SHOULD THE AGREED-UPON RULES OF NEU-

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TRALITY BE VIOLATED. MEXICO, OF COURSE, HISTORICALLY HAS BEEN ONE OF THE LEADING ADVOCATES OF "NON-INTERVENTION" IN THE HEMISPHERE. PRESIDENT LOPEZ PORTILLO, WHO HAS BEEN SENSITIVE TO CRITICISM OF HIS EFFORTS TO IMPROVE RELATIONS WITH THE U.S. AND IRRITATED BY THE USG'S "UNILATERAL" DECISION TO ADOPT A PROGRAM AIMED AT REDUCING ILLEGAL MIGRATION TO THE U.S., APPARENTLY IS RELUCTANT TO PUBLICLY ASSOCIATE MEXICO WITH A NEUTRALITY AGREEMENT THAT HE INTERPRETS AS A CLEAR VIOLATION OF THE PRINCIPLE OF NON-INTERVENTION. END COMMENT. THOMPSON

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